

# AIRS Usage

Public Safety Interoperable Communications



Public Safety Interoperable  
Communications Office



# **INSTRUCTOR INTRODUCTION**

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# Performance Objectives



- Upon completion of this course of instruction, the students will:
  - Identify when AIRS is to be used
  - Demonstrate how to determine the correct channel to be used
  - Demonstrate an understanding of the Plain Language requirement
  - Demonstrate how to identify yourself when using the AIRS system
  - Demonstrate an understanding of the AIRS system's known limitations
  - Identify the responsibilities of the monitoring Dispatch Center and the requesting or lead Dispatch Center
  - Identify who to notify if there is a problem with the AIRS system



# AIRS INTRODUCTION

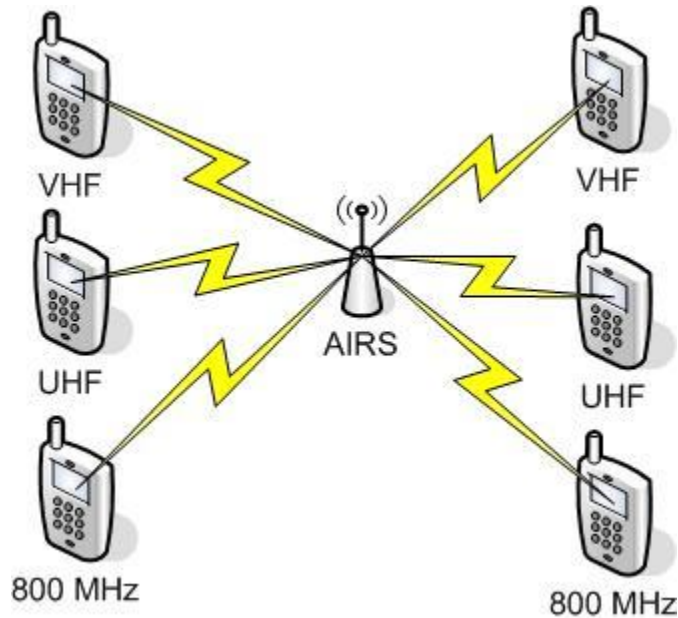
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# AIRS



- AIRS is a suite of full-time, cross-banded (i.e. VHF, UHF, and 800 MHz) mutual aid channels designated specifically for multi-agency use across the State of Arizona.
  - Users on the same channel, using different frequencies, are able to speak to each other under most circumstances\*\* (ex: UHF user on AIRS1 can speak to a VHF user on AIRS1)



\*\*See [Direct or Simplex slide](#) for exceptions

# When to use AIRS



- AIRS may be used for situations that require interoperable communications to coordinate multiple public safety/public service entities and/or activities across two or more separate radio systems.
- Examples include, but are not limited to:
  - Search and rescue operations
  - Wildland firefighting
  - Pursuits that cross jurisdictional lines and involve many agencies, especially when they out run their radio system
  - Planned events involving multiple agencies, such as marathons or bicycle races
  - Multi-agency drills and exercises



# AIRS Prioritization



AIRS Usage is prioritized based on:

1. Disasters, large scale incidents, or extreme emergencies requiring mutual aid or interagency communications.
2. Incidents where imminent danger exists to life or property.
3. Other incidents requiring the response of multiple agencies.
4. Pre-planned events requiring mutual aid or interagency communications.
5. Incidents involving a single agency where supplemental communications are needed for short term agency use.
6. Drills, tests and exercises.

# AIRS Prioritization – Simultaneous Incidents

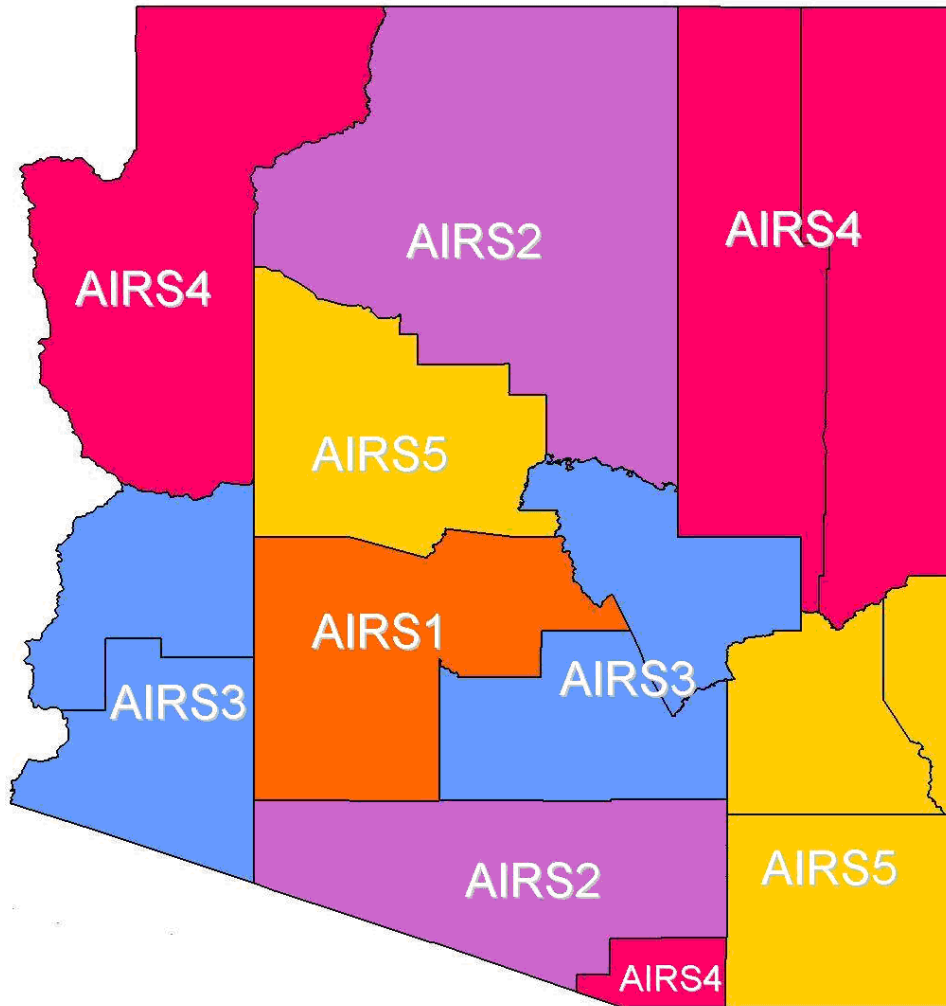


In the event of multiple simultaneous incidents within the same priority level, AIRS channels should be allocated with the following priorities in mind:

1. Incidents with the greatest level of exigency (e.g., greater threat to life or property, more immediate need) have priority over less exigent incidents.
2. Agencies with single/limited interoperable options have priority use of those options over agencies with multiple interoperable options.
3. When at all possible, agencies already using an interoperable asset during an event should not be redirected to another resource.



# AIRS Channel Selection



Coverage areas are drawn on county lines, but coverage *may* extend beyond those artificial limits.

The **AIRS Coverage Map** is available on the PSIC website for quick reference  
<http://www.azpsic.gov/library/airs/>

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# REQUIREMENTS FOR USING AIRS

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# Plain Language



- All interoperable communications during multi-agency, multi-discipline incidents will be in plain language
- Avoid using radio codes, 10 codes, call types, acronyms, and abbreviations as they may cause confusion between agencies
- Ensure that all verbal requests for assistance or backup clearly specify the reason for the request

**Plain Language Resources** are available on the PSIC website -  
<http://www.azpsic.gov/initiatives/sop/plainlanguage.htm>

# Unit Identification



- Announce your home agency prior to announcing your unit identifier during interoperable communication situations
  - “MCSO T544”
  - “Southwest Ambulance 172”
  - “Tolleson Engine 191”
  - “Southwest Gas ...”
  - “Red Cross ...”
  - “Salvation Army...”
  - “Somerton Dispatch....”



# **MONITORING & DISPATCH ACTION**

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# Regional Monitoring & Dispatch



- Most regions around the state have a Dispatch Center designated to monitor AIRS
  - Users should become familiar with which towers have a Dispatch Center assigned to continuously monitor the AIRS channel and which ones do not
- Some regions have more than one Dispatch Center monitoring AIRS
- Users should become familiar with the monitoring Dispatch Center(s) for their region (Gila County Sheriffs Office vs Navajo County Sheriffs Office)

Refer to the **AIRS State Plan Standard Operating Procedures** –  
*AIRS Regional Monitoring Assignments*

<http://www.azpsic.gov/library/airs/>

# Communication



- AIRS makes use of conventional repeaters
- Monitoring Dispatch Centers can communicate with users throughout the regional coverage area
- User to user communication is possible only between users having coverage from a common tower within the region

# Request to Use an AIRS Channel



- To request an AIRS channel for a multi-agency incident:
  - Notify the monitoring Dispatch Center over the air or by phone and describe the nature of the incident
  - The monitoring Dispatch Center will confirm the availability of the AIRS channel
  - The agency leading the incident will assume dispatch responsibility for the incident
  - The monitoring Dispatch Center will continue to monitor AIRS
  - The lead Dispatch Center should follow their own agency SOPs for managing the incident
  - At the termination of the incident, the lead Dispatch Center will announce that AIRS will no longer be used, clear the channel and notify the monitoring Dispatch Center



# When AIRS is NOT Available



- If AIRS is requested and is not available for use:
  - The monitoring Dispatch Center will advise the requesting agency the channel is in use
  - The monitoring Dispatch Center may suggest alternative interoperable communications resources based on their knowledge of other available resources
  - The monitoring Dispatch Center may attempt to provide both requesting agencies with any available information needed to prioritize the use of AIRS for the simultaneous incidents
  - The agencies leading the simultaneous incidents will determine which incident will be assigned the AIRS channel based on the prioritization guidelines outlined in the AIRS State Plan SOP
  - If the AIRS channel is transferred, the new lead Dispatch Center will notify the monitoring Dispatch Center

# Itinerant Use



Itinerant users = responders working outside of their agency's radio coverage area

- AIRS is available for emergency use by itinerant users
  - Itinerant users may use AIRS to request assistance from the monitoring Dispatch Center in an emergency
  - The monitoring Dispatch Center will stay in contact with the user requesting emergency assistance as long as appropriate
  - The monitoring Dispatch Center will contact the agency having jurisdiction to respond to the user request with emergency services
  - The monitoring Dispatch Center may facilitate notification to the user's agency of the situation, if requested to do so
  - The incident will be documented based on each agency's internal daily practices and/or policies



# AIRS SYSTEM LIMITATIONS

# Coverage Limitations



- There are gaps in coverage
  - Coverage is not guaranteed throughout the region
  - County coverage maps are based on estimates from tower sites
- Actual coverage areas overlap in some areas and may cause interference if both channels are in use simultaneously
- Users should become familiar with coverage areas in overlapping regions to identify which AIRS Channels may be available and the associated monitoring Dispatch Center(s)

See County Maps in **AIRS State Plan SOP**

<http://www.azpsic.gov/library/airs/>

# Direct or Simplex



- Direct or simplex AIRS channels are not able to be monitored by any Dispatch Center
  - Example of direct or simplex AIRS channel: UAIRS\_D
- Direct or simplex users *will not* have the ability to communicate across different bands (ex: VHF to UHF)

# Encryption



- AIRS channels are NOT encrypted
- AIRS channels are rebroadcast IN THE CLEAR across all three bands (VHF, UHF and 800)
- Users must consider this when using AIRS for sensitive information



# PROBLEM ID AND RESOLUTION

# Who to Notify if there is a Problem



- During an incident:
  - Notify the lead Dispatch Center or All-Hazards Communications Unit Leader (COML)
  - Contact the DPS Wireless Services Bureau NOC – 24/7 at (602) 223-2245
  - Move the incident off of the AIRS channels if the issue cannot be satisfactorily resolved
- Non-emergency/after incident
  - The lead Dispatch Center, the incident commander or the incident COML should email DPS WSB NOC at [wsb\\_noc@azdps.gov](mailto:wsb_noc@azdps.gov)
    - » Provide specific details surrounding the problem
    - » The channel that was being used
    - » Include names of specific users/agencies that were involved, when applicable
    - » Point of contact for follow-up by DPS WSB NOC





# QUESTIONS?